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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL  
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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 27, 2009

In Today's Papers

#### Erdogan Receives Martyrs' Families

Media outlets report that Prime Minister Erdogan, who met Wednesday with family members of martyrs and veterans in Ankara, said no speculation would be allowed over Turkey's unitary structure. Erdogan noted the "democratic initiative" was a project of unity with the aim of solving the terrorism problem. He added that Turkey has to abandon emotionally based approaches and take the next step together as a nation. Erdogan also stressed that if some steps had been taken 24 years ago, Turkey would perhaps would not have been in its present situation. After the meeting, the martyrs' families told the media that PM Erdogan informed them that a declaration of a general amnesty was "out of the question."

#### Basbug, Erdogan Call On PKK Militants To Surrender

Papers report that military General Staff (TGS) Chief General Ilker Basbug has said that PKK terrorists who recently surrendered to security forces were "all released" and called on them to trust the Turkish judiciary. "On July 14, terrorists surrendered to security forces, and ten of them were released immediately by the courts. Two were arrested, while the remaining two will be tried without detention," said Basbug. On the other hand, Prime Minister Erdogan followed suit and said that there was "nothing to be afraid of".

#### Bahceli: The AKP Sets The Scene For Ethnic Separatism

Papers report MHP leader Devlet Bahceli has said Turkey was going through difficult times regarding the Kurdish question and called on everyone to "take a position on the issue." Bahceli claimed that in recent months, the ruling AKP government has been setting the scene for ethnic separatism under the name of "resolution and opportunity." He accused the government of carrying out a level of "destruction equal to that of an outside invader."

Meanwhile, papers report the MHP will hold a conference on August 29, at which chairman Devlet Bahceli will evaluate the "Kurdish initiative" process. Papers said that the party administration reportedly ordered mandatory participation at the conference entitled "The Dissolving of Both Our Country, Turkey, and Our Ideals."

## Editorial Commentary on the Kurdish Initiative/TGS Statement

Yalcin Dogan commented in mainstream Hurriyet: "The Kurdish operation and the PKK separated themselves from Abdullah Ocalan (Apo) between 1999-2005. It was Turkey's biggest mistake not to take any action regarding the Kurdish issue during that period. Because, now Apo and the PKK, the PKK and the Kurdish operation are re-joining again. Apo has become the most popular person among the Kurds again. Now, there is a huge test in front of the AKP government: To stop Apo's progress and to break it at some point, and to reveal their own program. It seems that the AKP is failing to explain what kind of solution they are working toward. The AKP is unable to explain itself and is heading toward being isolated."

Semih Idiz wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Opposing the AKP government's Kurdish initiative strongly, the MHP insists that the military has the last word on this issue. Main opposition CHP also is hiding behind the military. I was talking with a foreign diplomat yesterday and he said "you need a civilian initiative before the Kurdish initiative." It is only natural for the military to talk on issues related to Turkey. However, it is so odd that each time the military speaks, the civilian wing gets electrified and believes that the last word has been said on the issue. That is why we definitely need a civilian initiative. If we continue to accept everything the military says as 'law', Turkey will have a real hard time ahead of it."

Kadri Gursel wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "What I understand from the TGS statement is that the military doesn't want a peaceful and democratic solution to the Kurdish issue. And, as long as the AKP

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government fails to admit that they don't agree with this statement, we have no reason to believe that the government is sincere in searching for a solution."

Fehmi Kuru wrote in Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak: "Democracy is not a system where civilians hold the drum and the military holds the knocker. In democracies, the same hand holds the drum and the knocker which are the elected civilian office holders. Other than the military's remarks, the position of the two opposition parties affects the process (Kurdish initiative) negatively. Now AKP has to pursue a policy to make everyone feel that the civilians are in control. The cost of ending an initiative, which was enthusiastically received by everyone, will be very difficult. The government should work toward advancing and successfully finalizing this process while making the opposition parties to pay a heavy price."

Four Soldiers Killed Due to Punishment, Not Accident  
Media outlets cite a report by Taraf daily yesterday that on August 17, four soldiers were killed in the eastern province of Elazig after a lieutenant gave one of the privates, Ibrahim Ozturk, a hand grenade whose pin he had pulled out to punish him for sleeping during his night watch. It had previously been claimed that four soldiers were killed when a hand grenade exploded accidentally as they were patrolling the area against the outlawed PKK. Tumer reportedly told the other officers that he had given Ozturk a live hand grenade to teach him a good lesson. Tumer also said he punished the private in line with the military's training procedures, according to papers.

Holbrooke Blames Gulf Countries Over Money Flow To Taliban  
Islamist-oriented Zaman reports the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, told CNN in Istanbul that it was "oil money" coming from the Gulf countries that helped Taliban stand. Holbrooke said Taliban received donations from the Gulf countries in amounts of more than billions of dollars the organization gets from poppy production and heroin trade. Holbrooke also blamed, without giving names, some foundations for supporting Taliban, and stressed that cutting the money flow to the terrorist organization was an important part of the war, reports Zaman.

TV News (CNN Turk)

Domestic

- Financial Times draws attention to the statement issued by Turkish military chief General Ilker Basbug and says the Turkish military backs the ruling government's Kurd move.

- Higher Education Board (YOK) will hold a meeting Thursday during which they will discuss a request for the establishment of 'Kurdish Language and Literature Department' in Mardin's Artuklu University.

- Deputy Prime Minister Ali Babacan said Turkey was working on its own economic stabilization program, adding they were ready to accept the IMF's proposal for supporting this program.

- TGS Chief General Ilker Basbug will host an iftar dinner for 800 martyrs' families on September 2.

- The sixth round of collective bargaining talks between the government and labor unions has been completed. The government offers to give civil servants 2-percent wage hike in the first half of 2010.

- Nobel prize holder novelist Orhan Pamuk, before his visit to Moscow on Thursday, told Russian magazine Timeout Moscow that freedom of expression does not exist in Turkey yet and that Ataturk's and Turkish military's present understandings of secularism are completely different.

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World

- Iraqi President Talabani has described Turkey's Kurdish opening as an "important step," and adds that Turkey should not miss the opportunity for solving the Kurdish question.

- The Council of Europe Local and Regional Administrations Convention issued a written statement expressing pleasure over the "Kurdish initiative" of the Turkish government.

- Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, one of Iraq's top Shiite leaders, has died of lung cancer.

- Bosnian forensic experts find the remains of at least 60 people killed by Bosnian Serb forces early in the 1992-95 war.

- Syria reports its first death related to swine flu.

SILLIMAN